

Senate concurred in that approach to extension of the AMT relief. I think that is an extremely important principle to be established in the Senate.

With regard to the farm bill, there is widespread agreement on both sides of the aisle that we ought to pass a farm bill and we ought to pass it as soon as possible. I think getting the consent agreement to get the amendments down to 20 on each side is a significant step in that direction. I am pleased to hear the majority leader would like for us to stay on that bill, make progress on it, and finish it before Christmas. That is certainly my view as well.

With regard to the Energy bill, we understand there are two highly contentious, well-publicized provisions of tax increases that have been inserted by the House: At a time when oil is close to \$100 a barrel, many of us think a tax increase is not a good idea, and the wind mandate, which is particularly onerous on those of us in the Southeast where there is not much wind, which basically means, in effect, a mandatory rate increase for utilities and for utility ratepayers all across the Southeast. I am hopeful we can get those two items out of that bill.

The President has indicated he will veto the bill, and I think there is a view on the other side of the aisle, as well as on our side, that we would like to have an energy bill actually enacted into law; that is, signed by the President. As the majority leader has indicated, hopefully we can get those problems removed from the Energy bill next week and move toward a Presidential signature.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

Mr. REID. If my friend will allow me.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this has been cleared by floor staff. The unanimous consent request I just entered needs a clarification. So I ask unanimous consent that it be clarified that nothing else be in order prior to the vote tomorrow morning—no points of order. I think there is a general understanding.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The senior Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I just want to say that I have no objection. I wish to comment on the Energy bill. It has been a long time getting here, and it still is not finished. There are provisions of that Energy bill that, if passed, will be superb for the people of this country. It is too bad the bill is laden now with two provisions that we did not have in our bill, that we did not contemplate. We will have to work our way and see what happens. They are serious. They are serious enough to cause the President to veto the bill. I am hopeful we will be able to find our way to get those two provisions out—the

tax provision and the provision with reference to mandatory 15-percent alternative energy fuels in our States. Those two are very difficult. If we keep any of them in, our work is going to be for naught.

So I hope everybody understands the situation. It will be an excellent bill without those provisions, and there may be a few other cleanup provisions we need in the House bill. We will work on them in the next few days.

I thank the leaders.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The President pro tempore is recognized.

Mr. BYRD. What is the floor situation, Mr. President?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The President pro tempore is notified there are no orders in effect.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I speak out of order for no more than 10 minutes.

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MONONGAH, WEST VIRGINIA, MINE DISASTER

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, as a son of West Virginia's southern coalfields who grew up in a coal miner's home and married a coal miner's daughter, I note that today is the 100th anniversary of the Monongah, WV, mine disaster, a particularly momentous and solemn observance for the coal miners of West Virginia.

The Monongah, WV, mine disaster remains today the worst industrial accident in American history. At least 362 coal miners lost their lives in that explosion on that cold December day, December 6, 1907. The truth is, some of the miners inside Fairmont Coal Company's No. 6 and No. 8 mines were boys—mere children, in fact—whose names did not appear on the company's official ledgers. So we may never know exactly how many lives were lost inside that mine on that dark day.

Sadly, many more miners across West Virginia and the Nation would perish, including another 78 miners in an explosion in that same West Virginia community a little over 60 years later, before Congress would respond with the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969.

Coal miners are a different breed. Coal miners are bound together in ways perhaps not unlike the bonds that develop between soldiers or others whose occupations are inherently dangerous. Coal miners share a vocabulary foreign to most outsiders. Coal miners must place great trust in the persons next to them for their safety. Although mortal danger stalks them daily, in every minute of every day, this mutual trust and mutual dependence creates unusually strong bonds. Coal miners enjoy an unusually deep camaraderie.

Today in Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Montana, Virginia, Utah, Alabama, Wyoming, and West Virginia, coal miners are marking the 100th anniversary—that is today—of the Monongah, WV, mine disaster.

They do it with reverence, and they honor their survivors. In West Virginia, we also mark December 6 as Miner Day and celebrate all coal miners—past, present, and future.

Coal remains today, this very moment, the backbone of America's energy supply. Over half of all the electricity we consume every day—and some of it is burning here tonight in the ceiling of this Hall—over half of all the electricity we consume every day is provided by coal miners. We must protect those coal miners. The names Alma, Darby, Crandall Canyon, and Sago remind us that mine disasters are not simply a part of the coal industry's past; they are part of our present.

As we remember the miners who lost their lives at Monongah on that cold December day in 1907, let us also recommit ourselves to protecting the health and the safety of all those men and women who so bravely toil in our coal mines today. May we also take a moment to consider that the current political debate regarding the future of coal—black diamonds—in our national energy policy is taking place under lights—right here, for example—under lights illuminated by the work of coal miners, in the warmth of furnaces fueled by coal miners and completely independent of any foreign sheik or imam, thanks to coal miners—coal miners such as my dad, coal miners such as my wife's father, coal miners such as my brother-in-law. Coal miners, coal miners, coal miners—may God bless them.

Mr. President, I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent we proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SNOWSPORTS OUTREACH SOCIETY

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I rise today to acknowledge the work of the Snowsports Outreach Society, SOS Outreach, based in Vail, CO, which is dedicated to providing outdoor recreation and confidence-building opportunities to underprivileged youth.

The snow sports industry is an essential part of Colorado's lifestyle, economy, and image. Colorado's mountainous terrain and world-class resorts have set the standard for the ultimate experience in sliding on snow. As a skier, I understand the importance of this outdoor activity—in all its forms—

for its health benefits as well as the recreation economy of Colorado and the country's ski resorts.

SOS Outreach complements the benefits of snow sports by providing dynamic programs to 2,500 youth in need nationwide. During the current season, 2,000 Colorado participants will be enrolled in a 7-year curriculum. I am proud to recognize the work that they do to grow the sport and promote positive self-esteem in their participants.

Now celebrating its 14th anniversary, SOS Outreach was founded in Vail, CO, in 1993. SOS Outreach is a grassroots, 501(c)(3) organization. Through the work of its founder and executive director, Arn Menconi, and former director of snowboarding for Vail Resorts, Ray Sforzo, a charity was developed that appealed to the mountain resort's desire to build the community by serving underprivileged youth.

SOS Outreach first introduced youth to the benefits of outdoor recreation during the 1995/1996 season when they taught 40 youth snowboarding. They were provided with one day of free lessons, equipment, and lift tickets. Since their first season, SOS Outreach has partnered with mountain resorts, youth agencies, foundations, corporations, and individual donors to expand its nationally recognized curriculum and serve over 7,500 youth. SOS Outreach is further leveraging their partnerships to expand their programs and include skiing. Over 7,000 program days will be provided at 29 resorts across the country, 13 in the State of Colorado.

SOS Outreach provides participants with a high-quality, resilience-based program that positively impacts a participant's self-esteem and ability to participate positively within their communities; supports underserved youth through adult mentorship; and encourages personal character education through SOS Outreach's five core values: courage, discipline, integrity, wisdom, and compassion.

SOS Outreach would not be successful without the substantial support of the following individuals and organizations. I would like to recognize and thank each of them for sustaining such a program in Colorado:

Bill Jensen and Kara Heide of Vail Resorts; Ken Gart and everyone at Specialty Sports Venture; Chris Ryman of Booth Creek Ski Holdings; Colorado Mountain Resorts for their donation of lift tickets, lessons, and rental equipment; Harry Frampton and Ceil Folz of the Vail Valley Foundation; Robert Veitch of the Harold W. Shaw and Mary Louise Shaw Foundation; Linda Childers of the Daniels Fund; William Hybl of the El Pomar Foundation; Bill Cotton of Optic Nerve Sunglasses; Robert Marcovitch of K2 Inc.; Mike West of 686; Wendy and Mike Carey of Seirus; Chaos Hats; Ride Snowboards; Salomon Sports; Sutherland Foundation; Bob Herrnreich; Kay and Craig Tuber; to the staff of SOS Outreach: Arn and Anne Menconi, Michelle Hartel, Jon Garrou, Seth Ehrlich, Jody Link, Thersa Bisio;

and the hundreds of adults that give of themselves to be positive mentors to these young people.

Mr. President, I wish to recognize SOS Outreach for its work and extend my wishes for its continued success.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I object to the unanimous consent agreement to pass S. 2338, the FHA modernization bill.

The Senate has twice attempted to pass a complex and critical mortgage reform bill without the opportunity for debate or amendment. I certainly understand the importance of this issue, which is why I believe the bill must be afforded time for proper scrutiny and debate by the Senate. It is naive, irresponsible and reckless for the Senate to claim it can fix this national challenge by rubberstamping our approval for this legislation without the opportunity to improve the bill through amendments.

More importantly, however, this bill is not the proper response to the housing crisis. This bill increases the availability of government-backed mortgages, adding a liability to the taxpayer of \$1.6 billion in government-backed loans. This bill greatly increases the loan limit which the government may insure, while simultaneously decreasing the down payment requirement for borrowers. This only makes taxpayers liable for billions of dollars in loans that may default. The solution to the mortgage crisis is fewer risky loans, not more.

Proponents of the legislation have argued that this bill is a low-risk way for the government to prevent future subprime foreclosures. However, this bill only creates more opportunities for borrowers to receive government-backed loans, increasing the liability on American citizens, but not preventing the possibility of delinquency or default.

According to a recent analysis by the Wall Street Journal, many subprime borrowers are not delinquent because they cannot afford increasing adjustable rates, but because they cannot afford their initial rates in the first place. The Wall Street Journal states:

It is true that many subprime borrowers were sold a toxic mortgage by unscrupulous mortgage brokers. However, the primary reason for the spike in subprime delinquencies so far is that many subprime borrowers have taken on more debt than they can pay back using any reasonable interest rate.

It would be unconscionable to shift this burden on to the Federal Government, especially at a time when our national debt stands well over \$9.1 trillion, or \$30,132 per citizen.

Sixty-one economists from universities and think-tanks from across America released an open letter to the U.S. Congress advising against "excessive new regulations or federal interventions" to deal with credit repricing in the subprime mortgage market. The letter warns: "Legislation to create new underwriting standards will reduce competition and restrict consumer ac-

cess to credit. Additionally, efforts to bail out or shore up lending institutions create a moral hazard that would slow the adjustments required in the marketplace. . . . These [bail out] proposals would fundamentally alter the workings of the mortgage market, leaving consumers with fewer choices when seeking to buy a home and potentially increasing taxpayer exposure for bad loans."

The American people agree that making government-backed loans more available is not the right response. According to a survey conducted by Harris Interactive on behalf of the National Taxpayers Union, NTU, when asked which statement most closely reflects their views of allowing Federal agencies to increase the size of the loans they can insure and reduce down-payment requirements, 66 percent of respondents answered that "these proposals are nothing more than a taxpayer-funded bailout of banks and lenders that provided and profited from these risky loans." Furthermore, 60 percent of respondents said taxpayers would be most negatively affected if the government were to bail out the subprime mortgage market.

I do believe the Senate should debate this issue, and examine what can be done to keep borrowers from defaulting and ensure that Americans are able to stay in their homes. I believe lenders must take responsibility for their loans, including full disclosure about the terms of the agreement and the possibility of default, and borrowers must be responsible for the agreement into which they enter. Mortgage brokers, real estate agents and other lenders should be transparent with their lending conditions and must be accountable for full disclosure to borrowers. However, I do not believe it is the job of the government to bail out default mortgages and loans and it is not the proper role of the government to insure loans with taxpayer dollars.

TRIBUTE TO MAJOR THOMAS A. ROGERS.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I rise to recognize MAJ Thomas A. Rogers, Jr. of the U.S. Air Force for the exceptional work he rendered this past year while serving as a legislative fellow on my staff. Major Rogers is completing his Capitol Hill fellowship this month, and it is my hope that he has benefited as much from this experience as have I from having him on my staff.

In 1995, after his graduation from the Washington University Law School in St. Louis, Major Rogers received his commission in the U.S. Air Force. Since that time Major Rogers has served at base legal offices from Korea to Germany, as an area defense counsel, as the deputy chief, plans and requirements, Air Force Legal Information Services, and as an instructor at the Air Force Judge Advocate General School. Major Rogers has also deployed to Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan in